(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) and (b) Record of each and every demand is not maintained. No such demands has been received from the Government of Karnataka in the recent past. However, Hon'ble Memebr of Parliament, Shri Shashi Kumar, has requested to consider construction of new rail line from Tumkur to Chittradurg.

Late running and arrival of trains on SCR

2197. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of trains in South Central Railway which run late or arrived late during the last two years; and

(b) the action taken to improve punctuality of passenger services and strengthening monitoring mechanism for ensuring punctuality?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) On South Central Railway, out of 50353 train run during 2001-2002 (April-March), 1506 trains arrived late at destination. Similarly, out of 52248 trains run during 2002-2003 (April-March), 1812 trains arrived late at destination.

(b) The following steps are being taken by Railways to improve the punctuality of passenger trains:

(i) Intensive, round the clock monitoring of train at different levels *i.e.* Divisional and Zonal Head Quarters levels.

(ii) Punctuality drives are conducted from time to time.

(iii) Running of trains at miximum permissible speed subject to observance of safety limits and speed restrictions.

(iv) Improvement in Time tabling to provide a clear path.

(v) Improvement in standard of maintenance to reduce equipment failures.

(vi) Counselling and motivating staff to ensure punctual running.

(vii) Liaison with State Government to tackle the law and order problems and miscreant activities.

(viii) Upgrading infrastructure and systems etc.

Ex-gratia Payment

2198. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 691 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 25th July 2003 and state the compensation or ex-gratia payments made to the victims or their next of kin?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): No compensation has so far been paid. Compensation will be paid soon after the claims filed by the claimants are decreed by Railway Claims Tribunal. However, ex-gratia amounting to Rs. 49.9 lakhs has already been paid to the dependants of dead and injured passengers.

Vendors moving with burning stoves in compartment

2199. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what specific measures have been taken to avoid fire accident in the trains;

(b) why does Railways allow tea/ coffee vendors to carry burning stoves/chulahs in the compartments; and

(c) why there is no fire extinguishers existed in all compartments in Indian Railway even after many incidents of fire reported in the past?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) Indian Railways are continuously upgrading the fire retardant properties of each and every material used in coach construction so that the coach can sustain prolonged periods of exposure to fire caused in-advertently from external sources such as inflammable material in the luggage of passengers etc.